

MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society REPORT

Report #36, March-April 1981

Focus on Mentoring for and by Women

by Katie Funk Wiebe

My interest in mentors for women developed in several ways: from a study of the history of the Mennonite church, from an awareness of my own needs and those of my daughters and other young women for such a person, and from a study of Scriptures. The Scripture probably came first. I kept reading Titus 2:4 about older women teaching the younger women and wondering what that had to do with modern Christianity. It took a while to find out.

From even a limited study of church history, it soon becomes apparent that women of one generation have always felt a concern for the needs of the next one. Female students at colleges had "dorm mothers" and deans of women to whom they could turn for advice and comfort when they faced situations beyond their experience. For example, Mary J. Regier, first matron of the "ladies home" at Tabor college (Hillsboro, Kan.), was a mentor to hundreds of young women who studied there. Parents felt comfortable sending their daughters to Tabor knowing that at least one woman in that distant institution would keep an eye on and heart open to their child.

In Canada, after the large wave of new Mennonite immigrants from Russia arrived in the 1920s, a few women saw the needs of the many young women moving to the cities to find jobs to help pay for the travel debt incurred in coming to the new land. Anna J. Thiessen, matron of the Mary-Martha Home in Winnipeg, spent most of her adult life as the supporter, defender, and spiritual guide of hundreds of young Mennonite immigrant women who couldn't speak English, and who had few assets except housework skills and the reputation for being hard workers. She helped them adjust to the strange new culture. Other homes for working girls were modeled after this one by other Mennonite groups.

Many missionary endeavors at home and overseas were initiated and supported by women out of concern

for women and children of another country. These included orphans, the poor, and women behind the veil.

Many women's organizations, such as the now secular YWCA, and church organizations were begun by women concerned about the spiritual nurture and development of girls in the church. The Mennonite Church Girls' Missionary Service Activities is one such example.

Mary J., Anna, and others like them have passed from the scene. "Matron" and "housemother" have become old-fashioned words, if not concepts; yet their task of guiding the next generation and modeling an integrated lifestyle of faith and deeds is not outdated. Even though young women move to the cities, rent apartments, and become responsible for themselves, mentors are still needed.

But my interest in mentoring had another origin in addition to the above. Each time I sent my daughters into the city alone, I had a vague feeling of unrest I couldn't identify. They were leaving home and home community. "Let go," said one voice. I wanted to. But at the same time I wished for some of the old-fashioned houseparents. Recently I listened to a friend whose daughter had moved to the city to find a job. She expressed the same concern. Few pastors invite parents to solicit their help in finding apartments, jobs, and friends. What could she do?

Granted, girls today are more sophisticated, and know better how to manage, but the need for emotional support from an older person remains the same. I asked myself why the women of the church haven't taken up this concern to a greater degree.

But my interest in mentors also developed out of my own needs in life as my roles shifted from single person to wife, to widow, to working person, to writer. As a young woman, I wanted to write, but I knew no one who could advise me how to get started. I knew no writers,

The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.

and we girls were encouraged to turn to teaching nursing or secretarial work. Not until years later did I realize that what I had needed during those developing years was a role model or mentor, someone to guide, support and encourage me. Psychologist Daniel Levinson states that a mentor acts as sponsor and facilitates early efforts to realize that person's dreams. The mentor champions the young adult and models an effective style of adult living and working.

I see mentoring as a type of servant ministry of older woman to younger woman—discipling but not in an authoritarian way. It is in effect saying “I’ve been over this path before you. Use me as your model.” Several years ago I couldn’t understand the apostle Paul’s bold words in II Thess. 3:9 in encouraging his followers to use him as their model, but with the concept of mentoring in mind, the passage becomes clear.

I often envied my husband his mentor in his early years in the pastorate. An older retired minister spent many hours with him, yet allowed Walter freedom in the public area. The older man found much fulfillment in seeing the younger one develop under his guidance; my husband mentioned he felt more secure knowing he had someone behind him to lean on when congregational problems got rough.

While men more often have mentors than women, particularly in the business and professional world, I believe this concept can be developed among women as well. I see a number of areas in which a closer relationship between older and younger women is needed, particularly in times when traditional roles are changing and women are not free to choose to live isolated, untouched by external social forces.

Women in the home, who have chosen to be career homemakers, need older women to affirm their freedom to make this choice and not feel downgraded because they aren’t working outside the home. Women who don’t stay home need affirmation in their choices as working women.

Young wives and mothers, especially those separated from their own families because of geographic distance, need the wisdom and steadiness of older women to assure them God’s grace is sufficient for the most trying problems in family living. Our closely graded Sunday schools, and sometimes even our women’s organizations, make it almost impossible for different generations to become close friends; yet it is a goal worth striving for.

Though dorm mothers are gone, young female students need someone to counsel them on college campuses in areas other than academic work. They need women as role models at all levels of college life, particularly in administration and counseling; women as secretaries and teachers are not enough. As women

become a larger group on seminary campuses, some may need an older person assuring them, “It’s okay for you to be here in an M.Div. or Th.D. program.”

Mentors are needed for women moving into the uncharted territory of church life and service. Women who have been missionaries overseas have more often had a previous generation of missionaries to use as role models. As women move into more committee and board work, both here and abroad, they need both men and women to recognize and affirm their spiritual gifts for these new roles. They need someone to nominate them for positions, to make living space for them in boards, and in conversation during breaks, and particularly to defend them against criticism and ridicule. A mentor can act as a buffer to committee members who feel threatened by the woman’s presence or to constituency members who can’t understand why she is there.

Jesus was just such a mentor to his disciple Mary. He defended her against the criticism of her sister Martha, who wanted her back in the kitchen when she chose to sit at Jesus’ feet like any male disciple. He said she had chosen the better part, something not all Bible students accept yet. At another supper, Jesus defended and affirmed Mary when she broke the vial of perfume over his feet. He told her critics her act would be remembered as a memorial of him.

Mentors are also needed for women moving into other kinds of leadership, especially for those who travel. Their homes are not untouched by such a change. When men travel, they return to wives who help them recharge their emotional and spiritual resources. Unless husbands of women leaders are supportive in the same way, some such marriages flounder.

Mentors are also needed for women moving into the professions and the arts. If a new mother or a new board member needs someone cutting away the underbrush to make a passage easier, in the same way the developing novelist, poet, or artist needs an affirmer until she is established.

The benefits and rewards of mentoring or sponsoring young women, are many. A close friendship can help break the image of a false femininity encouraged by the mass media. A mentor can provide the wedge to open women’s minds and spirits to the great frontiers of Christian service open to them.

It is a way of handing on the tradition of faith, write Evelyn E. Whitehead and James D. Whitehead in *Christian Life Patterns*. “Rather than reproducing the next generation in our image and thus repeating ourselves, we gradually turn over to the next generation our society, its institutions, and even the Christian faith. The challenge of mature generativity is to trust in the generational process, for certainly the next generation will alter what we hand on to them. For the religious person this trust is in God’s guiding presence within the community of faith.”

This process breaks down when one generation refuses to let go of its roles and responsibilities and the next generation must beg, plead, or grab for oppor-

*The presence or absence of a hero or role model has an enormous impact on the development of the individual—Daniel J. Levinson in **The Seasons of a Man’s Life***

I Remember...

by Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus

It is 1927. At age 12 I am sitting across the table from our guests, a black preacher and his black co-worker. They have just observed a Mennonite communion and footwashing service at our church and have been invited home for Sunday dinner by my parents, an unheard-of thing in southeast Virginia. Papa writes the Kansas relatives: "Tell it not in Gath.... Yes, [they were] at the table with us! I told them if the law requires it, I can lay a straw between us!"

Papa and Mama (George R. and Katie Wenger Brunk) were my main models showing the way in every way that mattered (with some ups and downs, of course): how husband and wife stay in tune, how they relate to their children and others; how to show affection, be strict, be lenient; how to regard the Bible, pray, work, be playful and funny, manage money, serve in the church; how to buck the system when it is wrong, and lots more.

Later as I built upon that sturdy foundation of my life and needed to become a person separate from my parents and on my own, four women influence me significantly (some without their knowledge):

- I am age 12 in a Sunday school class of girls. Bertha Berkey, a very pleasant, caring teacher speaks of

tunity. It breaks down when individualism takes over. Even now women in professions and business and church institutions are taking on the unredeemed work patterns and attitudes men have deemed right; they are becoming workaholics, without time for their peers or subordinates, accepting each promotion or new committee appointment as a stepping stone to something more important on the way to power.

Mentoring, on the other hand, leads to a stronger sense of community and sisterhood. In the process of making room for others, self-indulgent attitudes have no room to grow, and the Spirit of Christ has opportunity to work. I believe the time for analyzing our roles is over and the time for strengthening one another is here.

I wrote friends in many areas asking them to share with *Report* readers their ideas on mentoring or role models. I told them, "Most persons who follow God's call have at some time come face to face with a person or an image who embodied the concept of discipleship as they believed it should be lived out. That life became their inspiration. Who was your mentor or role model? If you didn't have one, did you feel the lack?" These 14 articles (100 percent response to my query) are their replies.

Katie Funk Wiebe teaches at Tabor College, and writes and accepts speaking engagements from her home in Hillsboro, Kan.

the Scriptures with such clarity and conviction that I continue thinking about them outside of class. She helps us plan for additional class meetings in our homes. I love and admire her and want to be with her all I can.

- I am 13, sitting in a worship service at church. Papa, the bishop, sees Sarah Lapp, missionary, in the audience and invites her to the pulpit to speak. She stands a little to the side of the pulpit desk as she tells of the work in India. But I never saw a woman speak from a pulpit before.

- I am 15, snuggled under the covers on cold winter nights reading (aside from the Bible) the most influential book of my life, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whitall Smith. Fifty years later, I learn that the author was a woman preacher of wide influence.

- I am 18, a senior and a dormitory student at Eastern Mennonite High School. Miss Sadie Hartzler teaches my English literature class during the week and my Sunday school class on Sunday. Under her, in either class, you don't skim lightly over any lesson. You study and you think. In the Sunday school class she makes insightful comments, asks relevant questions, and on the blackboard writes brief statements that stick. She is a teacher worth imitating. Her sincerity and dedication to Christ are worth following.

- I am 65. The aspect of my life that I call a speaking ministry at times brings responses like this from young women: "I was in the audience at North Lima, Ohio church last Sunday morning when you had the message.... I am presently a student at Waterloo, Ont. Lutheran Seminary.... I want to acknowledge that we younger women could not be doing what we are if people like yourself had not gone on before. We have few enough models!"

Now, as a mother and grandmother, I cherish words from my children, undeserved but appreciated: "Thought of you and how much I love you and owe to you. My hope and aim is to be as good a mother as you have been and are.... It is a real advantage, a priceless gift, to have had the upbringing you and Daddy gave us, and we took for granted."

I remember a time when my discipline of this very child was not the wisest. **God, it must have been your overriding strength in my weakness...** your grace, your providence.

Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, Harrisonburg, Va., is founder of the "Heart to Heart" radio program, and ministers to families through Concord Associates in radio/newspaper messages and literature distribution.

...and thirteen more statements

Naomi Wollman, Moundridge, Kansas: Though I'm sure I was influenced by a number of people, I remember that as a child I admired an aunt who lived in another state and visited once a year. Aunt Eva was an attractive person who cared about everyone.

During college days and following my marriage, I lived near my aunt. Perhaps it was then that she really became my role model. Though we did not visit frequently, I did see her more often than my parents and other relatives because they all lived several states away. I admired her zest for life, how she and her husband enjoyed each other, her genuine concern for the welfare of others, her determination and ability to do well whatever she undertook—all exemplifying her vital Christian faith. Even in her terminal illness, her positive attitude prevailed. I cherish the moment after her memorial service, when one of my aunt's sisters-in-law told me I looked like Aunt Eva.

As a mature adult I found another model in my congregation. I felt very inadequate compared to her, but enjoyed working with her on various projects. Her role as mentor began when I was asked to be a nominee for a position outside our local church, something I wasn't sure I was capable of doing. I sought her counsel and was surprised when she told me that she had suggested me. We had worked together enough for her to know my weaknesses and abilities. With her encouragement, I accepted this challenge and several others since then, and discovered that God was able to use me in ways I had never dreamed were possible. I'm happy to have had the chance to think about my mentors and realize how important certain people have been in shaping my life.

[Naomi was elected as a deacon in her congregation in September, the first woman to serve in that capacity in her church or in any Mennonite church in the Moundridge community. She writes that her role model was Eva Tieszen Krehbiel of Hutchinson and her mentor is Gladys Goering]

A.E. Koop, Altona, Man.: My mother, a person of constancy, was always there when I needed her. She depended on the power of prayer. In my teens and early adulthood she was a friend I could share deeply with and could count on. I value her example and contribution to my life.

Elsa Redekopp is a person with a positive attitude toward life and people. Her free-flowing easy-going approach to life has repeatedly helped me to realize that I take myself much too seriously. Many times her affirmations of my worth as a person and of my strengths and talents, have given me the courage to

keep going. Her self-giving low-key witness has often times uplifted others including myself.

Gertrude Roten was my model as a woman in ministry at times when I struggled with my identity as a woman in the church and as a single person in society. She listened, expressed confidence, and encouraged liberally. Energetic and dedicated to the cause of Christ, she helped me to realize my responsibility and to set high goals.

Winifred Waltner was a great model of hospitality, enthusiasm and sincerity. She it is who through oriental brush painting revived my creativity and helped me to develop my artistic skills. Through her I have learned to use opportunities as they open up and to use my art as part of my witness.

And so it is that a few women have had an immeasurable impact on my life as a person, as a single person, and as a woman. God works in many ways; one way is through dedicated women of faith.

Barbara Esch Shisler, Telford, Pa.: Shortly after we moved into our house 18 years ago, I remember returning from a walk with my preschoolers, noting the new house and the charm of the children, but cross-examining myself on why I didn't feel happy or contented with what I had. What a gift a mentor could have given in directing me over the tightrope of traditional homemaking and personal aspirations.

From afar, I admired Miriam Sieber Lind and Elaine Sommers Rich, but no one I knew attempted such a thing as poetry. My struggles at the kitchen table with the immortals and their poetics was a solitary engagement. My early efforts at poetry writing were a shame-faced secret.

Because I have since received a lot of encouragement from seasoned writers, I want to pass it on. Several young women are my confidants, though this has happened without prescribed intentions. We may discuss marriage or parents, poetry or church issues, but I am gratified at the freedom and warmth of these exchanges. As we overcome barriers of age groupings, we can give and receive support in identifying and developing our gifts for the benefit of others as well as the joy of ourselves, to the glory of God.

Helen Alderfer, Scottdale, Pa.: The household of my growing up years on a farm at Sterling, Ill., consisted of parents, four children, a grandmother, an aunt and two hired men (one lived in, the other came in by day).

Aunt Lena was a single woman, 11 years older than my mother. She never had a home of her own, but spent

My approach to congregations considering women [as pastors] is "Come and see. If this is not of God then tell me what it is. I'll give you some models. You ask these women to share what they are doing and let that be the reference....I think we have made some very significant progress.—Jacob T. Friesen, ministerial placement, General Conference Mennonite Church, quoted in Window to Mission, February-March 1981.

her whole life working in the home of others, 20 years in my parents' home. She walked with a limp due to a birth defect of a foot, and she was shy and unassuming. But I remember that home was warmer and happier and kinder because she was there.

I know now that she worked very hard and that she must have been a great comfort to my mother during the busy child-raising years on a large farm. My memories are of her not only accepting but appreciating me at every stage of growing up.

Aunt Lena had a room of her own as did Grandmother, with the understanding that when company came she would give her room for guests and share the grandmother's room for the duration. There were dozens of relatives stopping to see Grandmother Conrad from Oregon, California and states between, as well as from the east. In retrospect I wonder if having a room of one's own on those terms was much of an honor.

I remember one night when travelers arrived after Aunt Lena had gone to bed, and I ran up to break the news. Deep in fifth or sixth grade history I stood at her bed and cried urgently, "The Redcoats are coming." Aunt Lena sat up and cried, "What, what?" Then seeing the source of the cry of alarm she laughed and hugged me.

But I do not remember her for her sense of humor. I remember her for the grace with which she worked for us and with us. I recognized that she worked for love of God and us. She modeled servanthood for me as long as she lived. Much of what I learned about serving others was learned in the classroom of life we shared. And because one learns best from those with whom one has the deepest relationships, the lesson was learned indelibly.

Wanda Horn, Topeka, Kan.: When I think of one mentor who, more than any other person, has brought me to where I am as a Christian and a person, it would have to be my mother, Margaret Frye.

When I was nine and our family first heard of salvation through faith in Christ (as opposed to "doing the best we could") it was Mom who took the initiative in seeing that ours became a Christian family. Because she so firmly claimed God's promises, she, Dad, my younger sister, and I all became Christians within a few months' time.

During my childhood on an Iowa farm, simplicity of lifestyle was not just a cliché; we lived simply because we had no choice. Frugality assured having a little money left to buy groceries next week or next month. Conservation of natural resources meant that the supply of well water might hold out until the next rain or that the woodpile might not be all burned up before spring. Later, when the struggle for survival became less pressing, the ideas of frugality and conservation were too firmly ingrained to be cast aside and have remained a part of my life.

When I was a teenager Mom taught me to sew and to clean a house, as well as something about cooking. She

Eighty percent of judgment jobs are hidden in the unpublished job market and reached only through the grapevine or mentor system.—Gail Sheehy in Passages

encouraged me in school work and in music. She gave me a boost each time I felt living a Christian life among non-Christian classmates was too big a job for me. She listened as I poured out typical high school woes, sometimes sympathizing and sometimes giving a verbal "swift kick" when I needed one. I don't mean to give the impression that Mom did all these things alone. In many ways she and Dad operated as a unit, and I treasure the security I gained from their solidarity of action.

Now that she is a widow with her own two daughters grown and married, Mom has turned her mentoring attentions to the younger women of her church. Seeing many young couples severely threatened by the economic recession, Mom asked her pastor for an opportunity to meet with some of these young wives and share methods of economizing she has learned through the years. The result so far has been two seven-week sessions of classes on "Economizing God's Way," with more probably coming in the future.

Since January of this year Mom's ministry has expanded to include one day a week at the Christian school her church operates, teaching some things as cooking, meal planning and food purchasing.

My mother's influence is still very important in my life. I don't always agree with her, nor do I always follow her advice. But each year increases her value to me as a mentor and a friend.

Lois Gunden Clemens, Lansdale, Pa.: A woman who did significant role modeling for me was an elementary school teacher of mine. For five impressionable years—from grades three through seven—she was my teacher in a one-room country school. In looking back over those years, I realize how much she guided and inspired me. She caused learning to become an interesting and exciting process for me; in addition she taught me the discipline of good study habits. I experienced the satisfactions resulting from work well done. An element in her effectiveness as a teacher was the caring relationships she established with each of us. On the playground as well as in the classroom she showed respect for us and taught us likewise to respect one another. She knew how to create a spirit of cooperation in an atmosphere conducive to learning. I am sure that when I in turn became a teacher, I was greatly influenced by the role modeling she had provided me.

When it comes to one who in the process of my growing up embodied for me the concept of discipleship as she believed it should be lived out, my mother stands out as my best role model. We daily saw her faith lived out in the serenity and confidence with which she faced whatever came her way. Her awareness of God's presence and help was often expressed in the words of hymns which she sang as she went about her work. She

Mentors voluntarily commit themselves to guiding new generations and younger associates.—Eric H. Eriksen in Childhood and Society.

conscientiously lived by the religious principles on which her life was based. Her attitudes toward others and her relationships with them clearly reflected the Spirit of Christ. She taught us always to look for the good in others instead of criticizing their less desirable traits. She showed in concrete ways that she cared deeply about the welfare of others to whom she could minister, whether they were near or far. The gentleness and firmness of her loving ways in dealing with us called forth the best in us throughout our childhood and growing-up years. Even when her body was made helpless by the ravages of Parkinson's disease during the final years of her life, she was sustained by the same faith and trust in her Lord which had always provided strength for her living. What an inspiration her life has been to me!

Bertha Born, Garden City, Kan.: "Daughters in 1980" was the title of a column in our local newspaper recently. I read with interest the predictions of 20 years ago which have become facts in the 1980s. Traditional roles of women and men are changing.

Each morning as I drive to work, I see many people I know en route to their jobs. Women of all ages are driving to their place of employment. Men are taking children to the day care center or going to schools to attend parent-teacher conferences. This is not the world of work I knew 25 years ago as a bride when I worked as a secretary.

We have only one child at home now, and a 13-year-old needs only to be taken to school in the morning. But I have become very conscious of what younger mothers face each day as they leave the home for an eight-hour job, and the support they need from friends and the church.

Within the church community I sense an uneasiness in knowing how to utilize professional women in the church program. Too often the woman employed outside the home is considered ineligible for any church ministry. The church does not hesitate to put working men into positions in the church program, but a woman? Together with other women, I am attempting to make the church body more aware of the gifts and capabilities of employed women and to encourage changes in our thinking and an acceptance of that change.

Marie M. Moyer, Souderton, Pa.: When Mother absented herself during days when we were home from school, we knew where she went. We peeked behind the closed door and saw her kneeling by a favorite rocking chair. We knew she was praying for us and so we tiptoed away reverently. At night we knelt by her knee to "say" our bedtime prayers. The habit and need for prayer Mother taught me early in life.

Another spiritual mentor, Irene Weaver, a fellow

missionary in India, led me deeper into exercising faith as I prayed through Christ who has all power in heaven and earth. In every home that she ever lived—in India, Africa or Kansas—Irene always has had a prayer corner. Besides a place in the house, Irene always has a throne in her heart where she meets God daily.

Prayer—talking to Jesus as ever-present Friend and Helper—has been my greatest resource, in pleasant or trying circumstances. Both of these dear women, Mother and Irene, continue to inspire my faith through contacts, sometimes infrequently, but always through meaningful memories with gratitude.

Eleanor Loewen, doctoral student in higher education, Bloomington, Ind.: "We become a part of all we meet." I have often thought how persons I have met have shaped and become part of my personality, faith, philosophy, aspirations—yes, and also of negative characteristics. Several role models are easy to identify in my life, but no real mentors except my mother who guided my personal and professional development. She has been my greatest inspiration, particularly since she began teaching Sunday school a number of years ago, constantly growing in confidence, faith and service to the point where she is now the first single deaconess commissioned by the congregation. What an inspiration!

Grandfather Loewen exemplified studying the Bible, relying on faith, memorizing Scripture, and developing a positive attitude toward life.

Guidance seems to have come to me primarily through significant comments made at "teachable moments." For example, when I completed a year of work as head resident at Goshen College, Russ Leichty (former dean of students at Goshen) said, "I hope you don't forget this area." That remark, plus a satisfactory experience, led me into college student personnel administration.

Others who cared, gave of themselves, became very close friends and very special role models were two former teachers. If I could continue, as a single person, to grow, develop, and serve higher education and the church like Mary Oyer of Goshen College, how satisfying that would be! The other inspiration is the late Dr. Elizabeth Greenleaf at Indiana University. She exemplified professionalism and interest in her students. Christian colleges and those training to work in these colleges had a tremendous friend and supporter in "Dr. G." Women with these qualities are rare in higher education (four years—or more—liberal arts colleges and universities), primarily a "man's world."

God has put role models and significant persons at critical stages of my life. I am thankful for each one.

* * * * *

Note: These next four testimonies illustrate a network of mentoring.

Dianne Doty, Garden City, Kan.: I'm excited that the truths of Titus 3:4,5 are being explored and shared with women today. As a young woman I lived with a family in Dallas for a while. Skip and Buzzie, a young couple with two small children, were involved in a discipling ministry, training young men who lived in their home. I assisted Buzzie with meals, household chores, and care of the children for three and a half years.

Buzzie was always very caring, open and honest with me about all areas of my life. She encouraged me in my walk with the Lord, in learning to study God's Word, in sharing principles of life with me from the scriptures. She was transparent—we prayed together about her concerns as well as mine. We became friends. She shared confidences and trusted one another. I observed her life—her walk with God, her relationship to her husband and children, her hospitality and her priorities.

Now, when God brings young women into my life, I trust God to make me the example, encourager and teacher to them that Buzzie was to me—to be as transparent as she was so they can observe my relationship with the Lord under all circumstances. My main involvement with women has been through leading Bible studies on "Parenting" as well as spending time with several women on a one-to-one basis regularly. We also have had several engaged girls live with us for a period before marriage for in-depth training.

Marlene Miler, Tyrone, Okla.: My relationship with Dianne Doty started after being in a Bible study led by her husband. I was drawn to her because of her quiet spirit and her open desire to be Christ-like. When problems came up, I couldn't find anyone whom I knew to turn to until I met Dianne. She took me to the Scriptures for answers to my problems instead of just giving me her opinion. I responded to her as a person because she would listen to me. So when I get discouraged or have a problem, I usually call her.

If Dianne hadn't been there when I needed her, I wouldn't be where I am today, passing on to other women what she taught me.

Mrs. Keith Tillotson, Garden City, Kan.: Dianne Doty has been fulfilling Titus 2:4,5 in my life. She started before I was married a year and a half ago and counseled me in ways that prepared me for marriage, and has continued to help me love my husband....One area

that has stood out is her encouragement to communicate in our marriage.

I spend one afternoon a week with her. We share our lives and do projects together. I also learn by being around her during other activities, such as church functions or school activities. These situations help me to bring up questions to discuss with her later.

At this point my husband and I are starting our family. Dianne gives me counsel when I have questions on how to train, discipline and love our future children. The effort and time Dianne willingly gives has meant a lot to me. I feel much better prepared to handle my home.

Terry Cox, Mound City, Kan.: I came to know the word of God as I came to know Dianne Doty. As a result, my life was and is still being influenced for Christ. Dianne hides the word of God in her heart and I see it lived in her life. My desire to follow Christ is thereby quickened.

I first met Dianne while participating in a Bible study which met in the Doty home and which was also led by Bob and Dianne Doty. One of the girls had said that Dianne was a good person to talk to when you had problems or questions. Soon finding myself frustrated and discouraged about the Christian life, I picked up the phone and called Dianne. Dianne came to my home that afternoon, the first and perhaps most crucial of many such times of sharing. Finding Dianne easy to talk with, I opened up and really shared the things that had been bothering me and the questions I'd long had about Christianity. She listened, she shared from her own life, and she responded to my questions directly and indirectly from the word of God. And that satisfied. What I could not agree with, I still had known down deep inside to be true. After many years of rebellion, I was gradually led back to God and began to grow as a Christian. What I did not realize during that period in my life but now recognize with deepest gratitude is that Dianne Doty was the link between me and the Lord.

During the next five years, Dianne became trusted friend, teacher and leader. And even now, though we live miles and miles apart, she still ministers to me by phone and letter. As I first began to grow, I had questions and more questions. Dianne encouraged me to write them down. At first, hardly a day passed that I did not call Dianne to visit and also to ask a question or two that had come up. Often I'd stop by her house on the way home from work or we'd get together for coffee.

continued on next page

Traditionally, a mentor has been defined as a trusted counselor or guide. Mentors help younger persons to have confidence in their own judgment, abilities, and gifts. Above all, a mentor is a trusted voice or authority who says, "You can do it. Keep moving!"—Katie Funk Wiebe, "Mentors," Perspectives (The Tabor College Bulletin), Fall 1979.

Women Refugees Face Special Difficulties

by Linda Gibson Hiebert

Ly, once a bright and happy 16-year-old, now sits in the dark corner of her older brother's refugee hut day in and day out rocking back and forth hugging her knees. She was raped three separate times by Thai pirates on her journey from Vietnam.

Khampai's family seems to be adjusting well to their new life in the United States. The children now speak English fluently and Khampai and his wife have good jobs in a factory. But each day Khampai's mother seems to have more difficulty adjusting. She thinks only of her family and friends "back home." She refuses to answer her grandchildren when they speak to her in English. Everything is strange, the food does not taste right and the bed is too soft. Lately, she only talks about dying.

Although far apart in age, experience and cultural background, these two women have one thing in common: they both have special needs because they are women refugees. In a recent survey the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) found that two-thirds of the people under its protection are women. In some cases, as with Somali and Afghan refugees, women and children make up almost 90 percent of those in need.

However, numbers alone are not the only reason women refugees need special attention. As wives and mothers, women play a vital role in the structure and well-being of the whole family. Any situation which affects women will directly influence their families as well.

There are many problems that both men and women refugees face, but in areas of health, nutrition, physical and legal protection, counseling and employment, programs for women have lagged behind. Thrust into a new society and culture, often as the head of a family, women generally suffer more radical changes in role

and status than male refugees. Traditionally in many cultures women are accustomed to keeping a low social profile, resulting in special problems if there are no male adults in their families. There is the burden of maintaining their families and assuming new economic and social roles, often without any educational and employment background, while competing for equal footing with other male refugees in the camps.

Tu, a 26-year-old "boat" refugee, recently arrived at a camp in Malaysia where she gave birth to a premature baby girl. Her husband was killed by pirates while on their voyage. She tried to give her daughter away to a refugee worker. "I can't take care of this baby. I have no training, no skill to get a job," Tu told the official.

Refugee programs have traditionally been targeted toward males because it is assumed that they are the heads of the families and the wage earners. Families headed by women are often the poorest. As a result the women are forced to work outside the camp, leaving the care of the family to the oldest daughter, who is forced to give up her studies to replace her mother at home. As a result, the cycle of poor education, low employment and poverty is perpetuated.

Widowed by the fighting in Cambodia, Khai fled her country across mine-infested fields with her five-year-old son and infant daughter. Alone, exhausted and sick with malaria, Khai collapsed close to the Thai border. She and her family were found days later by a group fleeing along the same path and were carried to the Khao I Deng camp. She is like refugee women all over the world: fragile in health due to multiple pregnancies, poor nutrition and limited access to health care in their own countries. They are worn down by the daily chores of camp life—standing in long lines for food rations, water, clinic visits and other supplies. Many are in a

continued from previous page

on a Saturday morning. We'd talk about what was going on in our daily lives, share our struggles, discuss Bible verses or passages, and pray. One fall we went out before work for breakfast about once a week. Another spring we met weekly in one another's homes to share and discuss a Bible study we were each completing. During all our times together, but especially during those first years, our times of prayer were special. The deep peace I experienced after a time of fellowship and prayer with Dianne sparked this poem:

Pray with me,
please.
Your humble words still my mind
and stop my wanderings
And in these fleeting moments
our souls rest
in the quiet presence of the Lord.

Dianne's ministry to me also meant seeing the "inside" of a Christian home for the first time. I was

welcome there. Her husband Bob, son Ty, and daughter Tana became special, too; I felt accepted and loved by them each. There was a warmth I experienced in the Doty home, which I'd known in no other household. After a time of fellowship with the Doty family, I left refreshed and uplifted. No book or course on family living could equal or replace what I learned about the Christian family by just being in the Doty home. And at the same time, I was observing Dianne not only as a Christian person but also as a Christian wife and as a Christian mother. This has been vital in my growth.

So, by knowing Dianne as personal friend, observing her in roles as wife and mother, and interacting with the Doty family, the priorities of my own personal life began to be reordered—almost naturally. What has Dianne's ministry meant to me? Everything. How would I have known if I had not seen and heard? And how would I have learned if she had not been there, if she had not responded to God's nudging to teach me?

state of apathy, and as a result the lives of their families suffer as well.

In some areas, the problems of women are compounded by poor diets in the camps where supplies are delivered by male refugee workers to men and boys who traditionally are first to eat. In very few circumstances are women involved in food distribution in the camps, yet equal distribution of supplies is vital to the well-being of women, especially in the child-bearing years. In Cambodia, malnutrition was the prime factor in producing amenorrhoea, which may eventually produce sterility if prolonged. Because of malnutrition, some Afghan women are able to breast feed their babies for only two months.

In one camp in Pakistan, Moslem Afghan women were denied access to a doctor because the only physicians were males. A Pakistani female doctor was not allowed to treat the refugee women because, the government argued, there were not enough local women doctors to treat both refugees and local people.

Family planning, especially for refugees, is a long neglected but vitally important area of health care. A UNHCR study of women over 16 years in an Indonesian camp found more than half were interested in family planning. But contraceptive services can be abused, as in Thailand where several hundred young women were injected by the Thai Red Cross with Depro-Provera, a highly controversial contraceptive, without knowing what they were receiving.

In refugee situations, law and order as well as social constraints often break down. Women and teenage girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation. There are ever-increasing reports of rape and abduction of women off the shores of Thailand and Malaysia. When victims of rape do reach safety, they are often isolated from the community because of social taboos and the lack of services to deal with the emotional problems and social ostracization that these women face. In resettlement, these women and girls are overlooked by the United States because they often have lost all other members of their family, or they are single heads of families, a distinct disadvantage in getting placement.

Women are also the primary victims of laws relating to the resettlement of polygamous families such as the Hmong (Meo) from Laos. U.S. law arbitrarily encourages dissolution of the family and changes the lesser wife's position without according her appropriate status or rights in the society.

Initial flight and the problems of asylum are only the beginning of the fear and loneliness women face as refugees. In resettlement or repatriation, women need continuing assistance where they find themselves without language or job skills and where husbands and children are swept up in their new life, leaving the women at home and isolated. They may become a burden to their families where once they were looked on as the source of cultural values.

In dealing constructively with the special problems of refugee women, absence of discrimination in programs

is not enough. In considering resettlement candidates, victims of sexual abuse, single heads of families, and single women should receive priority from groups such as Mennonite Central Committee.

In refugee camps themselves, MCC has begun some programs directed at women. MCCer Janine Rands of Tucson, Ariz., coordinates a training program in refugee camps in the Gedo region of Somalia that helps women develop skills in sewing and basket weaving. The purpose of the training is to improve the women's homemaking abilities and provide them opportunities to earn some money.

In Thailand MCC assists in the orientation of refugees on their way to Canada. Women and children are given special attention to prepare them for the climate, shopping procedures and various cultural differences they will face in their new country.

However, wherever MCC is involved with refugees, workers need to push even harder for special orientation, job training, legal protection, counseling of rape victims, and involvement of refugee women in camp administration. Failure to help meet the special needs of women will not only retard their ability to adjust to their new situation, but will seriously affect their family's health and well-being as well. (MCC News Service)

Linda Gibson Hiebert, former Mennonite Central Committee worker in Laos, is now with Indochina Project in Washington, D.C., with assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Resources on Mentoring

Full Circle (Stories of [General Conference] Mennonite Women) edited by Mary Lou Cummings. Faith and Life Press (Box 347, Newton, Kan., 67114), 1978. An international selection of biographies.

"Passing Along the Faith," by Katie Funk Wiebe in *Today's Christian Woman* (Revell), Winter 1980-81, p. 64. A lengthy article on the subject at hand. Available in Christian bookstores.

Which Way Women? edited by Dorothy Yoder Nyce, project of the Mennonite Central Committee Task Force on Women, 1980. A collection of 42 articles, plus bibliographies and poetry written predominantly by Mennonites and intended primarily for a Mennonite audience. Available for \$3 from MCC, 21 South 12th Street, Akron, Pa., 17501.

Women Among the Brethren edited by Katie Funk Wiebe, Kindred Press, 1979. Biographies of Mennonite Brethren women. Available from Box L, Hillsboro, Kan., 67063.

Women in Search of Mission by Gladys V. Goering. Faith and Life Press, 1980. The story of beginnings and goings-on of the (General Conference Mennonite) Women's Missionary Association, now Women in Mission.

The Women's Mission and Service Commission of the Mennonite Church is in process of producing its history. Watch for it!

news and verbs

Kristina Ediger, Enid, Okla., helped set up the physiotherapy department of the National Rehabilitation Center in Zimbabwe. "It seems," says Kristina, "as if NRC will be an example of national unity."

June Alliman Yoder captivated the Goshen College community last fall with a series of four chapel presentations entitled "I Met God...and How!" Appropriately costumed, she dramatized the biblical stories of Sarah, the Samaritan woman at Joseph's well, Sapphira and Martha. June is director of admissions at Goshen College and holds a master's degree in theater arts.

Katie Funk Wiebe is the new chair of the nominating committee of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace Section.

Lois Gunden Clemens, Lansdale, Pa., gave the keynote address on "The Secret of Unity" at the annual Spiritual Life Conference of the Japan Mennonite Church held in Obihiro, Hokkaido. She was in a North American group participating in a fellowship visit during September and October under the sponsorship of the Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Ind.

The Task Force on Women has appointed Bertha Beachy to represent the Task Force at the Mennonite World Conference General Council meeting in Nairobi this summer. Consider helping to make it possible for Bertha as well as Asian, African or Latin American women to be present. Send contributions marked "MWC Travel Fund for Women" to Ron Flickinger, Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section, 21 South 12th Street, Akron, Pa., 17501. Two-thirds of the contributions will be forwarded to the MWC Travel Fund and one-third will help cover Bertha Beachy's expenses.

Letter

Dear Muriel: Just a note of appreciation....I am currently working on my D-Min. program in Drew University. The project for my thesis covers women in leadership with a special interest in their involvement in pastoral team ministry. Would you have access to the names of Mennonite women who are either ordained or pastors or pastoral team members or who are serving in such leadership positions without ordination? This information would be most helpful and appreciated.—
Frank E. Nice, Durham, N.C. (2 December 1980)

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

Mennonite Women Writers, May-June 1981. Elsa Redekopp, coordinator.

The Minister's Spouse, July-August 1981. Martha Smith Good, coordinator.

Discipleship Motives in Career Choices, September-October 1981. Edith Krause, coordinator.

Singleness and Single Parenting, November-December 1981. Bertha Beachy, coordinator.

Are you aware of written or audio-visual resources on these topics? We would like to recommend them in *Report*. Have you (or do you know someone who has) been researching or writing on these topics? Someone who is particularly interested in them? Put us in touch with such people. What actions have been taken in these areas in your community or in your congregation?

Send all information to Editor, *Report*, 4830 Woodland Ave., Lincoln, Neb., 68516.

The *Report* is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

- * To subscribe send address to:
(subscription is free)
- * To change or correct your address, please send your old address with your correct address to:

MCC
21 S 12th St
Akron, PA 17501

(Allow 2-4 weeks for address change.)

MCC

Mennonite
Central
Committee



21 South 12th Street
Akron
Pennsylvania
17501
U.S.A.

**Address
correction
requested**

2nd Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
Akron, PA 17501